



Notes from LEAD Editor

This month in **LEAD** you will find a number of articles discussing employee and departmental empowerment. For instance, the piece entitled "Energize Workers with Positive Questions" illustrates how rephrasing questions can empower employees. You will also find "four easy words" you can use to help employees solve problems and take initiative. We encourage you to apply and communicate the ideas you find in **LEAD**.

LEAD article

9 STEP GUIDE TO EMPOWER EMPLOYEES

This 9 Step guide should be used as a constant reminder of how to empower employees. We encourage you to hang it up in your office for you and others to read.

- 1: Trust employees.
- 2: Treat all employees with dignity and respect.
- 3: Tell employees what their responsibilities are.
- 4: Provide employees with authority that is equal to their responsibilities.
- 5: Set standards of excellence.
- 6: Provide employees with the training that will allow them to meet the organization's standards of excellence.
- 7: Give employees the knowledge and information they need to do their job.
- 8: Provide regular feedback on performance.
- 9: Recognize employees for their achievements.

-Adapted from *Motivational Manager*, (800) 878-5331, www.ragan.com

ENERGIZE WORKERS WITH POSITIVE QUESTIONS

The kinds of questions you ask employees can have a deep impact on their enthusiasm. Avoid questions that focus on blame and disempower workers:

- Why can't we get it right?
- Why does this always take so long?
- Why are we so far behind deadline?
- Who made that decision?
- How could you make that decision?

Instead, try asking questions that focus on the future and give employees opportunities to use their skills:

- What parts of this project are you happiest with?
- What have you accomplished so far that we can celebrate?
- How did you accomplish that?
- What are the ideal results we're after?
- What could we do to get there?
- If there were no limitations, what would you do to achieve your goals?

-Reprinted with permission from *Positive Leadership*, (800) 878-5331, www.ragan.com

EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES WITH FOUR EASY WORDS

When employees come to you with a question or problem, don't answer it. The most important question you can ask an employee in this situation is:

"What would you do?"

Or you can rephrase this question by saying that you have some thoughts, but you would like to hear theirs. Instead of telling the employee how to solve a problem or handle a situation, you invite the person to share his or her own ideas, and/or encourage them to start to think about solutions.

Certainly, there are some times when employees need to know what you want or think, but many times they have already formed ideas and opinions that should be heard. Then, once you've settled on a course of action together, the employee will already have bought into the solution and will act more confidently and responsibly to make it happen. Additionally, this helps the employee develop his or her own skills. As an added benefit, when others see the employee taking responsibility for his or her own ideas, they'll in turn become more willing to share their creativity with you.

-Adapted from "World's Quickest Empowerment Tip," by Peter Grazier, Teambuilding Inc.





UNLEASHING EMPLOYEE INNOVATION

• In today's competitive work environment everyone in the organization needs to be encouraged to contribute their ideas to help find better ways of doing business. Managers and supervisors can encourage innovation and creativity in the workplace from employees by following these simple steps:

1. **Set clear guidelines.** Don't make employees guess where their time and resources should be spent. Define expected outcomes so that everyone in the organization understands where their creativity can be useful. In addition, make it clear what areas of the operation need new creative solutions.
2. **Encourage diversity.** Every person has his or her own approach to generating new ideas, so learn how each person works and thinks differently. Use this understanding to help each person maximize their strengths while contributing their ideas.
3. **Minimize fear of failure.** Regard mistakes as learning opportunities. Reward employees who take risks and encourage them to continue to be innovative.
4. **Take personal responsibility.** Develop an organizational climate for innovation. Start with yourself.
5. **Encourage active communications.** Creativity and innovation can be furthered when employees discuss things in the open and with each other.

-Adapted from *1001 Ways To Take Initiative At Work*, by Bob Nelson, Workman Publishing, New York 1999

LEAD QUOTE

"We need leaders who care about their craft; continuously learn, improve, and experiment; care about employees; help them to realize their potential; and have character and do the right thing!"

-Jaime Escalante, High School Teacher

BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN EMPLOYEES

The greatest challenge of every leader is bringing out the best in people. Former Dallas Cowboy coach Tom Landry describes this as "getting people to do what

they don't want to do in order to achieve what they want to achieve." In order to accomplish this, leaders need to concentrate on three things: visions, goal completion, and the development of people.

Vision Effective leaders establish an internal vision. The leader's vision can be described in terms of outcomes — better ways of doing business and employing people's energies, ingenuity, and commitment; generating ongoing processes, services, products, and procedures in which all hands are committed to both internal and external clients. Also, the vision includes seeing individuals and teams resolve problems rapidly. This is accomplished by encouraging communication from the frontline where task-related information and expertise reside.

Goals The leader's vision provides an organization or team with long-range goals to which all hands can aspire.

A team leader's goal might include seeing all team members actively engaged, constantly improving the delivery of products or services, and willingly supporting each other in their team efforts. Effective leaders are gifted at helping teams evolve toward the stages of independence and interdependence where full empowerment and extraordinary results can be a reality.

People Leaders are catalysts who help people realize their high-performing potentials. Leaders accept people where they are with respect to job knowledge and any performance anxieties they may have and help them complete tasks along the way. Successes breed self-confidence and a desire for more of the same. The leader directs, consults, and collaborates as people learn to direct themselves. People become more committed to their profession, which becomes exciting, challenging, rewarding, and fun.

The leader's role is to help each member complete tasks and to provide direction, support, and resources. As competence and commitment levels improve, individuals and teams will become more self-directed resulting in empowered employees.

-Adapted from "Better Leadership," by William Parker, *Executive Excellence*, March 1994

